2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

laborious and the product bitter to the taste. European salt is much better liked, but it is hard to get except in districts near white stores. In distant parts of the country both European and Mpika salt are used for barter, and the traveller will notice as he gets farther and farther away from civilization that the purchasing power of salt goes up and that of money goes down. The white man's carriers are given salt in part payment for their work so that they may buy their provisions with it, and women prefer it to any other form of payment for small services. I have often found that children would rather be given a little European salt than a sweet, and they eat it neat. At Katenda's village during a period of shortage (March 1933) some children, who had been living for some weeks chiefly on gourds, picked up grains of salt from the floor of my tent with moistened fingers. Their avid faces were striking.

The craving for salt is so strong that the word itself (*umucele*) has come to have figurative meanings. In proverbs and folk-tales the husband goes to fetch salt from distant places, and this represents the fulfilment of his duties as a husband. In the girls' initiation ceremony the woman who dresses up as a mock bridegroom at one stage of the ritual, carries an imitation lump of salt over her shoulder, and small pieces are included among the sacred objects (*mbusa*) presented to the girl during the rite. In the ceremonial of founding a chief's new village, salt, together with flour and meat, are buried in the foundations of the ruler's hut. Nowadays, too, the word *umucele* is sometimes used as a generic term for European goods as being the most highly valued of these. Two old women who came to live near Kasama because of the shopping facilities there, described their motive as, 'We came to lick a little of the white man's salt'.[1]

(*c*) *Meat.* The natives' longing for meat is also almost a craving. Meat and fish are considered the *umunani par excellence* and a special word *ubukashya* is used to describe the hunger for meat as distinct from other foods. The supply of game has probably always been inadequate in this area, but the situation is considerably worse to-day. I have noticed that natives returning from the copper field, however sceptical they may be of the other advantages of civilization, are all unanimous that 'It is fine to get so much meat.' In his own country it is no exaggeration to

[1] *Twaisako kumyanga tumucele.*

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

[415] One axe, one spear, one hoe, a bed-mat, four or five cooking
422

556 pots, and the same number of baskets and a couple of blankets would be the usual equipment. Few men own more than one [291] cloth, or an outfit of European clothes such as shorts and a shirt, or the tattered remnants of these. Women rarely have more than one frock or cloth. Besides these, the people treasure certain hereditary objects of no economic value such as the bow of the man, the bead girdle (*umushingo*) of the woman, and certain beads, [231] ivory bracelets, or anklets. A few Bemba own goats and sheep, and many keep chickens and pigeons. All these possessions are indi-
428 vidually owned and bequeathed to descendants according to rule, i.e. the heirlooms described above descend to the legal heirs, the maternal nephews or grandsons. Any personal property made by a man, or acquired by his efforts, may go to his own sons, his wife, or his sister, as the case may be. His clothes or money, or his hut, for the year or two it remains habitable, go to his wife or his children, and the working pots and baskets to the wife or the sister.

556 If the material possessions of the Bemba are few in number,
422 they are also impermanent. Few objects can be reckoned as lasting more than four or five years. It is impossible to protect the wood of houses and furniture from the ravages of white ants, and the same applies to baskets, mats, and most of the other contents of an ordinary hut. Even sacred relics guarded with the utmost care seem to have been frequently destroyed in the past by insects or fire, and most of the surviving heirlooms are those of iron or copper, ivory, or a few beads. This in itself affects the people's attitude to property, and the social values associated with its accumulation.

436 To turn to present-day conditions, it must be realized that a
465 money income is not yet a universal measure of wealth in this community. The amount of money the individual Bemba handles each year is very small. I put it at 15*s.* to £1 on an average (cf. Chap. X). Money can only be obtained by work for Europeans or occasionally for fellow Africans. The average unskilled wage was 7*s.* 6*d.* a month during my stay, and the opportunities for regular employment in the country were very few.[1] Practically only the domestic servants and clerks could be considered as regular wage earners, and these were naturally a very small proportion of the community. A certain amount of money is said to

[1] Cf. the figures for absentee labour given in Chapter I. It was reckoned in 1934 that in the Kasama area only 30 per cent. could have earned their tax of 10*s.* locally.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

be brought or sent back from the mines, but it is difficult to reckon how much.[1] From superficial observations it seemed that most natives returning from the mines brought clothes and other European goods with them, not money, and that the circulation of cash from this source had very much decreased since the cessation of recruiting with its associated system of deferred pay in 1931. Grain is bought by the Government and mission schools in the area, and a few objects like baskets or mats are sold by craftsmen, but the total sources of money revenue are still exceedingly limited, and anything like a persistent accumulation of money does not exist, and could not exist whatever the people's economic ambitions.

Conceptions of Wealth.

If, then, in the old days a man's material possessions were no measure of his wealth, on what did his economic privileges or status in society depend, and what were the chief ambitions he pursued? Roughly speaking, the aim of every Bemba was to secure rights over the service of others, whether slaves, relatives, fellow villagers, or subjects. This would enable him to make slightly larger gardens than his fellows, or in the case of a chief, to form a band of retainers and counsellors and an army. With the economic privileges he gained through their labour were correlated political position and status. In fact the latter were considered the more important assets. The employer, if he may so be called, gained not only labour for his garden, and warriors for his army, but the prestige of a large following. 'How did you recognize a man of rank or wealth [*umukankala*] in the old days?' I once asked an old courtier of Citimukulu. 'By his clothes?' 'No! not by his clothes. He only got cloth if the chief gave it to him from time to time. Otherwise he wore bark-cloth like every one else. You would know him by his little band of followers [*kalibumba kakwe*], his kinsmen, or the slaves he had.' And this is a statement that can be made with equal truth of a chief to-day, of a European, or indeed any one in authority. 'He came with a lot of people' is a comment which is always received with respect, and I believe the fact that so many natives employed at the mines pay quite a high proportion of their wages on hiring servants is

[1] The Merle Davis Commission estimates that one-fifth of the total earnings of urban natives returned to the rural areas in N. Rhodesia. *Modern Industry and the African*, 1933, p. 184.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

travellers in those regions.[1] So the desire for garments of some sort is not a new one, but it is the first time in history that it has been open to commoners, as distinct from chiefs and notables, to raise their status in this way. Clothes are a source of excitement and delight at this stage of transition, and a sign of distinction between the civilized man and the bush native.[2]

I have described this craving for European goods because it directly affects the production and storage of food. Conditions in this area are such that money cannot be regularly earned or accumulated, or used to produce an all-round improvement in the standard of living. But the desire for clothes is at present one of the chief incentives which drives men to leave the territory to look for work, and a man gone to the mines is said to be away 'clothing his wife'. Further, as regards the stay-at-home native, it can be said at once that where millet can be sold for money, either to Europeans or to urban natives, the natives always succumb to the temptation. It is unfortunate that in this area the chief saleable crop is a staple food, for it means that the people sell their supplies often at the lowest prices without thought of the hunger they must presently suffer. Dealers in grain will tell you that in times of famine millet is often produced somehow and from somewhere, if only it can be sold for money. I have myself seen women near the motor road sell their last basket of grain for a cheap cotton vest torn in a week with the hard garden work. The old realistic attitude towards the value of food described in Chapter III seems completely abandoned in these circumstances. Old men sometimes say: 'You can't fill your belly with shillings', but the younger men and women would rather go without food than clothing, and wherever money has been substituted for tribal obligations formerly paid in work or foodstuffs, these sums are never spent on food, but always on European goods. The cases of the payments to the father-in-law have already been described, but it is equally true that money paid to the chief in lieu of his garden labour would

[1] As compared with the Ila on the Kafue River who have remained naked until very recently.

[2] A missionary, clad himself in an open shirt, shorts, and sandals, once asked one of his teachers why he went about on a sweltering day in a thick suit with long woollen stockings and two shirts. The teacher replied: 'You could go naked but people would still know you had clothes in your cupboard, but if I didn't wear my clothes people would say I was an uneducated fellow with nothing more than a pair of shorts.'

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

177 291 556 probably not be used for this purpose but for acquiring European objects of different kinds.

556 To conclude, we are dealing with an economic system in which the accumulation of large quantities of any type of material goods was neither very possible nor considered desirable. The accumulation of food was not an end in itself for the chief or notable, but rather a means to enable him to build up a large following of people which was to him the highest aim in life. His economic assets consisted in rights over food produced by others as well as in the cultivation of millet himself. For the commoner, the possession of excessive food supplies was definitely considered unsuitable, and people were afraid to admit they had such a store. In short the surplus crop was not a Bemba ideal. Under modern conditions the desire for European goods, and in particular clothes, leads the people to squander even their available food supplies on objects which have become more important to them.

The Use of Money.

●436 177 Money has been used in this territory for about thirty years. The first white administrators in the district were told to encourage its circulation as 'a civilizing influence' and, as soon as possible, wages were paid and taxes levied in currency and not in kind. European stores were opened shortly after, and very few of these shops will now accept payment in kind instead of money. It is, therefore, worth considering this specific question: Has the introduction of a money currency facilitated the distribution of food?

436 In the first place, the use of coins in everyday life is still very limited. This is chiefly due to the shortage of money in the area as a whole. No native could hope to substitute cash payments for all his present kinship obligations or other needs of life because he would rarely be in a position to do so. But it is also a fact that the Bemba still use money in a completely different fashion from our own. They regard it as a medium to be used in specific transactions only. These are, naturally, the purchase of European goods and the payment of tax, and, less obviously, marriage payments, sums paid for native crafts, the fulfilment of ceremonial obligations, and debts of honour. The Bemba buy European goods with money because they can get them in no other way. They pay taxes in money for the same reason. The substitution of small sums for the marriage payment has been an easy transition from

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

the old custom of giving the father of the girl two or more bark-cloths. In 144 marriage contracts I recorded small sums of money were paid in 86 cases, i.e. 59 per cent., and in six villages where I made marriage censuses an average of 6*s*. 6*d*. was paid for the *mpango* of the girl. The old bark-cloths were replaced by calico cloths, and many *mpango* are still paid in this fashion, and later by the money to buy the cloth. The 10*s*. given the father-in-law as the 'money to cut the trees' is merely the wage for a month's work at European rates.

Baskets, pots, axes, and other objects made by the Bemba craftsmen were always paid for by goods in kind or by service, and for these dues money has been nearly everywhere substituted. Even then, the purchase is not subject to the ordinary laws of demand and supply, since once the regulation sum for a basket or a pot has been fixed at 3*d*. or 6*d*. there it will remain, however scarce the materials of which it is made.

The use of money in Bemba ritual life is largely due to its rarity value. It has the prestige of an object that comes from a foreign country and which is possessed by few members of the community. Before the arrival of the white man it is clear that articles that came from far off, brought by Arabs, or sent as presents to the chiefs, had a particular value, and were kept as presents of honour or marks of status. Hence they were considered particularly suitable as offerings to the ancestral spirits. The use of bark-cloth for this purpose was common here as in other parts of Bantu Africa, but it was not the local bark-cloth that was hung on the shrine of the ancestor, but the valuable calico brought by Arab traders. In the same way I have seen barrels of guns stuck in the ground over the grave of a chief (Cilubi Island on Lake Bangweolu) and have been asked by the Paramount for china plates for the same purpose. He told me that plates or tea-pots had been offered to the spirits in this way in the old days because they were 'valuables' (*ifyuma*) and because 'we had not seen any before'. Cattle taken in war were also considered necessary for some ancestral sacrifices, although the Bemba are not a pastoral people. Money has apparently acquired a similar rarity value which it has not yet lost. A present of a coin is appreciated not only on its own account but because of the kudos it gives. Most Europeans hesitate to give money as a present to an equal or to a superior because it is a currency used for the ordinary run of economic transactions, and therefore seems to give a

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

431 commensurable value to the incommensurable gratitude, friendship,
436 or respect which he wants to express. He prefers to exchange his coins for some other object, possibly of far less practical value to the recipient. The African chief, on the contrary, is more flattered on receiving a coin, however small, than anything else, because, as he says: 'money is respect (*umucinshi*)'. Small coins are constantly used as presents of honour to relatives, and it is quite common for a servant who wants to make an elegant gift to his white master to do so by presenting him with a threepenny or a sixpenny bit. Sums of money are used as compensation in cases of injury or insult.

436 In particular ceremonies money again performs special functions. At a marriage or an initiation rite coins are used instead
[585 881] of the old bark-cloth, and also as a payment for ritual services or as a means of removing taboos. Sixpence or a shilling may be offered to the woman who lights a girl's fire on the morning after
[764] her marriage, to those who whitewash the hut after a funeral ceremony, or to remove a taboo on eating. At the ceremonial founding of the chief's new village there is now a fixed tariff ranging
[643 782] from 1*s*. to 10*s*. for the hereditary priests who are in charge of the rites, such as the lighter of the sacred fire, the opener of the sacred relic huts, or those who purify the chief, wake him ceremonially in the morning, or beat his hereditary drum. In all these cases the coins are used as valuables much as the ivory tusks, cloth, or bracelets of old days were employed, and their rarity makes them the most suitable objects available at the present day.

436 With this special attitude to money, it is not surprising that the
556 Bemba still consider it waste to use coins for the purchase of food. money is too rare and too hardly come by to be thrown away on a commodity that can be got in some other way. Only a few years before my visit an old woman was discovered dying of starvation in a disused hut on the motor road with a 2*s*. piece tied in a fold of her cloth. It had apparently never occurred to her to use the money to buy supplies on her journey to the mines to look for her son. Younger people have naturally changed in this respect, but it is still true to say that money is never 'wasted' (*ukuposa*) on food unless it is absolutely necessary, as it is near the white towns. Even then the transition to a sale from a gift from a kinsman or a subject is a very gradual one. People buying from relatives pay less than the normal rate, and usually add some service to the transaction Chiefs buying from subjects, as we shall see, pay nominal

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

sums for a particular object against the background of the complicated interchange of services in which the relationship of chief and commoner consists. They pass from one economic system to the other in the course of a day or a week, and they still consider such transactions irregular or out of the usual. They are not calculating to save money, nor do they rely on it in the ordinary course of events.

The Bemba wants money occasionally, and then in relatively speaking large sums—10*s*. for his tax or 5*s*. for a cloth. These sums he usually wants urgently, and is prepared to make unusual efforts to earn the money or to sell any property he has to get it. Less than a given amount apparently seems to him almost useless. In fact, when opportunities of earning money are so scarce the gap between 1*s*. and 10*s*. may well seem unbridgeable, and hence there is no attempt to save in order to reach the higher sum. I noticed that in the outlying districts natives who brought goods for sale asked for the specific sum they wanted almost irrespective of the amount of food they were selling. If I refused, I was often told: 'Well, 5*s*. is what I want, if you won't give me 5*s*., please take it as a present.' In the latter case the native returned to the old system of exchange by which presents offered put the recipient under an obligation to return and, if possible, to return more than he had been given. In the same way, carriers called out for labour will go on long journeys but do not like to sign up for short ones. The idea of regularly accumulating small sums of money in order to acquire greater ones only exists among natives who have a regular earning capacity, and it is natural that it should be so. The old attitude of the Bemba towards the amassing of food and goods, combined with their present limited opportunities for acquiring money, absolutely prevents the regular saving of money to be used to purchase better food.

The introduction of money has encouraged natives to sell more millet than they should, but its circulation is not sufficient to make it useful as a general means of exchange, and the people's attitude to its use still prohibits them working for a regular sale and exchange of food, such as will be necessary if the kinship system of the people still further breaks down.

Types of Exchange.

In this connexion it will be useful to summarize the traditional attitude of the Bemba towards trade or barter itself, and to describe

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

frocks. Two had worn out and two were in use, but the fifth remained. Driven to desperation by the food shortage, she walked to the Chambesi river and exchanged her 5*s.* frock for a 2*s.* basket of fish. On her return thirty miles to her home, she immediately sold some of the fish for a small quantity of millet (again at less than its current price) and with the millet made two gourds of beer. One she sold for a shilling and the other she and her relatives drank. In all such cases the Bemba in the hunger season seem to walk huge distances, make bad bargains on sudden impulses, and then squander the products of the expedition.

Near Kasama, where there are natives living in the white township or its neighbourhood, the Bemba lack of trading ability is shown even more strikingly. Here there are a number of men employed by Europeans, unable to make gardens either because they have been too short a time in the district, because they have left their wives behind, or because cultivated land is short. They have to buy food from the surrounding villages with money or with goods.[1] They prefer the latter because it is more economical: 'Salt is better because you can give a little at a time. Besides, women often want salt in a hurry and they agree to sell you what you want.' But here again, in 1934 at any rate, the buyers had to spend money on snuff, cloth, or salt without knowing which the sellers would happen to want that day, and there was no fixed rendezvous at which purchaser and seller could be certain of meeting. The wives of the domestic servants in one compound I knew used to get up at five in the morning and go along the different country roads hoping to waylay the incoming villagers before they reached the town. Quite frequently they came back empty-handed after waiting some hours because the sellers had gone the other way! Want of leadership and a rapidly changing situation may explain this lack of organization, but surely no tribe with the slightest tradition of trading would have failed to make some arrangement by which the sellers and purchasers of goods could be certain of meeting.

Bemba, who are recognized as being more skilled than their fellows at crafts—pot-making, basket- or mat-weaving, or the

[1] A clerk of a steady economical type estimated that he spent 6*s.* 2*d.* a month for himself and his family out of a 16*s.* wage, while two Government messengers' budgets came to 5*s.* and 7*s.* 6*d.* respectively. A cook, known to be a prodigal spender, as he called it, 'wasted' £1 a month on food and beer for himself and his two wives.